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C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 000256

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [EAGR](#) [ECPS](#) [EFIN](#) [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [SENV](#) [TRGY](#) [BN](#)  
SUBJECT: CHINA'S ENGAGEMENT IN BENIN

REF: A. SECSTATE 41697  
[1](#)B. COTONOU 192  
[1](#)C. 07 COTONOU 776

Classified By: Amb. Gayleatha B. Brown for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1.(U) China's engagement with Benin is based on increasing trade relations and financing the construction of large-scale infrastructure projects. China's involvement in Benin dates to the early 1970s when it helped construct large-scale irrigated rice farms along the Niger river in northern Benin. Chinese workers continue to maintain the dikes which protect these farms. As detailed in Ref B, during 2007 China provided financing for the construction of a new Ministry of Foreign Affairs and for the construction of hospitals and roads. China is a significant trading partner with Benin. In 2006 (the most recent figures available), China exported approximately 106 million dollars worth of goods to Benin and imported approximately 66 million dollars worth of Beninese products. China is currently building a new commercial center in downtown Cotonou (Ref C) and renovating and expanding its chancery.

2.(C) China has a limited military assistance program in Benin. It provided two old patrol boats to the Beninese Navy which are no longer operational. As noted in Ref B, the Chinese Ambassador and other Chinese officials will not provide details of the amount of aid provided to Benin or the conditions under which the aid is disbursed. President Yayi does not share that reticence and, during his speech opening the new Ministry of Foreign Affairs building, thanked the Chinese government for the provision of a 600 million U.S. dollar letter of credit following his 2006 visit to Beijing.

3.(U) Relations between the Chinese and American missions are cordial. At present there is no formal coordination of action between the two missions. As China begins to build hospitals and plans on constructing a dedicated malaria research and treatment center improved cooperation on the health front could be useful. Cooperation on reducing the red tape surrounding business operations in Benin could also be useful as it would be beneficial to investors and exporters from both countries.

BROWN